

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

Please amend the claims as follows:

1. (Currently amended) A support structure, for use in conjunction with a circular endoscopic stapling instrument having a staple cartridge assembly and an anvil assembly, the staple cartridge assembly having at least one annular arrangement of staple slots and staples positioned in the slots, the support structure comprising:

an annular ring configured to substantially overlie the at least one annular arrangement of staples of the staple cartridge assembly the annular ring including:

an outer annular wall having a diameter;

an inner annular wall spaced a radial distance inward of the outer annular wall and defining a space;

an upper wall interconnecting the outer annular wall and the inner annular wall; and

a lower wall spaced a distance from the upper wall and interconnecting the outer annular wall and the inner annular wall, the outer annular wall, the inner annular wall and the upper and lower walls defining an interior sealed reservoir; and

a wound closure material retained in the sealed reservoir, ~~and being dispensed upon therefrom~~ wherein the sealed reservoir is configured to dispense the wound closure material upon penetration by the staples during use.

2. (Previously presented) The support structure according to claim 1, wherein the diameter of the outer annular wall is configured to be substantially equal to an outer diameter of the staple cartridge assembly and wherein the diameter of the inner annular wall is configured to be radially inward of the at least one annular arrangement of staples of the staple cartridge assembly.

3. (Previously presented) The support structure according to claim 1, wherein the annular ring has a cross-sectional profile selected from the group consisting of circular, rectilinear, ovular, triangular and arcuate.

4. (Previously presented) The support structure according to claim 1, further comprising at least one removable support spoke integrally connected to and extending diametrically across the inner annular wall.

5. (Previously presented) The support structure according to claim 4, wherein the anvil assembly includes an elongated shaft, and wherein the at least one removable support spoke includes a central hub having a central axial opening formed therethrough, wherein the central axial opening is configured and dimensioned to receive the shaft of the anvil assembly therethrough.

6. (Previously presented) The support structure according to claim 1, wherein the wound closure material is at least one of an adhesive, a hemostat and a sealant.

7. (Original) The support structure according to claim 6, wherein the adhesive is selected from the group consisting of protein derived materials, albumin/glutaraldehyde materials, and cyanoacrylate-based materials.

8. (Original) The support structure according to claim 6, wherein the sealant is selected from the group consisting of fibrin based materials, collagen-based materials, synthetic polymer-based materials, synthetic polyethylene glycol-based materials, and hydrogel materials.

9. (Original) The support structure according to claim 6, wherein the hemostat is selected from the group consisting of fibrin-based materials, collagen-based materials, oxidized regenerated cellulose-based materials, gelatin-based materials, and fibrinogen-thrombin combination materials.

10. (Previously presented) The support structure according to claim 1, wherein at least one of the annular outer wall and the annular inner wall is comprised of a rigid material.

11. (Previously presented) The support structure according to claim 10, wherein the rigid material is selected from the group consisting of stainless steel and titanium.

12. (Previously presented) The support structure according to claim 10, wherein the rigid material is a bioabsorbable material.

13. (Previously presented) The support structure according to claim 1, wherein the annular ring includes a plurality of interstitial spaces extending therethrough, the spaces being configured and adapted to allow the legs of the staples to pass through the spaces.

14. (Previously presented) The support structure according to claim 1, wherein the annular ring has a plurality of cartridge orientation members adapted to orient spaces of the annular ring to radially and circumferentially overlie the staple slots of the staple cartridge assembly.

15. (Previously presented) The support structure according to claim 14, wherein the cartridge orientation members are a plurality of nubs extending therefrom, wherein the nubs are spaced from each other and are adapted and configured to engage complementary recesses formed in a distal end surface of the staple cartridge assembly.

Claims 16.-22 . (Canceled).

23. (Previously presented) A support structure, for use in conjunction with a circular endoscopic stapling instrument having a staple cartridge assembly and an anvil assembly, the staple cartridge assembly having at least one annular arrangement of staple slots and staples positioned in the slots, the support structure comprising:

an annular ring configured to substantially overlie the at least one annular arrangement of staples of the staple cartridge assembly, the annular ring including:

an outer annular wall having a diameter;

an inner annular wall spaced a radial distance inward of the outer annular wall and defining a space;

an upper wall interconnecting the outer annular wall and the inner annular wall; and

a lower wall spaced a distance from the upper wall and interconnecting the outer annular wall and the inner annular wall, the outer annular wall, the inner annular wall and the upper and lower walls defining an interior sealed reservoir;

a wound closure material retained in the sealed reservoir and being dispensed therefrom upon penetration by the staples during use; and

at least one removable support spoke integrally connected to and extending diametrically across the inner annular wall.

24. (Previously presented) The support structure according to claim 23, wherein the anvil assembly includes an elongated shaft, and wherein the at least one removable support spoke includes a central hub having a central axial opening formed therethrough, wherein the central axial opening is configured and dimensioned to receive the shaft of the anvil assembly therethrough.